LETTERS

It's Time for a Change in Tank Gunnery

Dear *ARMOR*,

Thanks for publishing Sergeant First Class Tim Gray's article, "Time for a Change in Tank Gunnery," in the March-April 2004 issue of *ARMOR*. His points are right on the money and obviously the product of his professional and personal experience and expertise. I believe it is important for the armor community to discuss gunnery doctrine and training for the Army, the current operating environment, and the war in Iraq. Even as we prepare to publish a new Abrams gunnery manual in May 2004, it is important that the discussion continue and that we are prepared to adapt our gunnery doctrine and training as the enemy and conditions evolve. Along those lines, I would make the following observations:

Tank combat in Iraq was a mixture of main gun, machine guns, and personal weapons such as rifle, pistol, and hand grenades. Yet, our gunnery training has always separated the tank weapons from the personal weapons. A tank commander (TC) in Iraq can be firing his .50-caliber one moment, directing main gunfire the next, and firing an M4 carbine a moment later. The same is true for the loader, so our training and qualification standards must account for that reality.

The conclusion drawn by senior leaders in World War II was that the tank's weapons were in order — the tracks, the machine guns, and the main gun — yet for decades our gunnery training gave primacy to the main gun engagements. In the Iraqi operating environment, both during major combat operations last March and April, and in the security operations since, the machine guns have been the most used and most critical weapons systems. Our training and qualification should account for this reality to prepare crews, sections, and platoons for today's combat. And, while we are increasing the machine gun training, we must account for reloading. There were multiple instances in the 3d Infantry Division's fight into Baghdad of loaders and TCs forced to reload the M240 and M2 while under fire. Of course, today's gunnery training contains no requirement to reload during Tables VIII, X, or XII. Absent doctrine and tactics, techniques, and procedures, the tankers were forced to develop their own. Similar to the small-arms qualification tables, machine gun engagements at crew and section level require a reload.

One area in which the Armor Center has been proactive since Operation Iraqi Freedom began is urban gunnery. The faster we gain a capability at each of our training centers and armor stations to execute such training, the more effective we will be in future operations. This capability must include a significant investment in short-range training ammunition (SRTA) for use in military operations in urban terrain (MOUT) sites.

One of the aspects of urban operations that SFC Gray highlights effectively is the greatly shortened distances at which engagements are conducted. I would add that short-distance, constricted-terrain engagements are not limited to villages and cities, but also include the palm groves found along rivers and canals. Scanning and search techniques are significantly more difficult in these types of terrain than at the Combat Maneuver Training Center or the National Training Center. Our home station and combat training center range complexes/live-fire areas must be modified to adapt to develop these skills.

All in all, we are on the right track. Let's maintain the momentum, discussion, and flow of lessons from the field and Iraq throughout the armor force.

JAMES K. GREER
COL, U.S. Army

ARMOR's January-February Issue Should Be Mandatory Reading

Dear *ARMOR*,

I found the January-February issue of *ARMOR* one of the best ever. While all the articles were on target and had substance, I would like to present special kudos to Captains Don Stewart, Brian McCarthy, and James Mullin for their article, "Task Force Death Dealers: Dismounted Combat Tankers," and Captain John Nall's article, "A Company Commander's Thoughts on Iraq." These two articles must be mandatory reading for all mounted soldiers headed to the Mid East or any region where peacekeeping and or/military operations in urban terrain (MOUT) are expected.

The similarities in Iraq to mounted force operations in Vietnam continue to surface. Having commanded a divisional armored cavalry troop in the Highlands in 1968, route security and convoy protection was our main task. As in Iraq, our unit rotated cavalry troops from one area to another every 2 months or so to keep us fresh and alert. However, once in an area, we tried to ensure the same platoon and same boots were on the ground each morning when we went looking for newly planted mines or improvised explosive devices along the roadside, or into areas susceptible to rocket-propelled grenade ambushes. Our folks became aware of the smallest details, such as dirt that had been shuffled during the night or signs of other roadside activity, and we checked out the area carefully before the daily convoys headed deeper up country to Pleiku, Kontum, or Dak To. The Iraqi terrorist is a bit more tactically and technically astute than the Vietcong and North Vietnamese Army; however, the environment is in many ways similar.

Iraq is a company commander's war, which includes platoon leaders, and squad leaders. Their articles reflect knowledge and lessons learned that will help all those who follow. Keep the reports flowing and thanks for the informative articles.

COLIN McARTHUR
COL, U.S. Army, Retired

Embracing the Uncertainty

Dear *ARMOR*,

Chief of Staff, Army, General Peter J. Schoomaker, has challenged the Army's leadership and training institutions to develop "a campaign-quality Army with a joint and expeditionary mind-set." "Expedition," as defined in *Webster's New World Dictionary*, is "a sending forth or embarking upon a voyage, march, etc., for some definite purpose, as exploration or battle." The implications, quite appropriate since 9/11, involve many unpredictables as to time, place, and enemy. For our Army, senior leaders who were raised in the comfortable era of a known enemy, with a known doctrine, a known sandbox, and forward-positioned forces and equipment, the challenges are immense, the needed fixes perhaps counterintuitive.

Among the shibboleths widely considered sacred in U.S. Army combat operations are the importance of detailed planning to support the military decisionmaking process, synchronization, and rehearsal. All of these were exemplified with great success in the run-up to the 1991 Iraqi war. So convinced were our Army leaders of the rightness of our doctrine, that General Frederick M. Franks Jr., was reported to have given, as one of his three reasons for not continuing the VII Corps attack during the first night of that war (24-25 February 1991), that his units had not practiced breaching operations at night (James G. Burton, "Pushing Them Out the Back Door," *U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings*, June 1993, p.39).

To accomplish the planning detail expected in current doctrine, large staffs, checklists, and detailed processes have increasingly been the norm. Recent articles in *ARMOR* covering aspects of the processes include LTC Kevin D. Poling's "Course-of-Action Development for the Maneuverist Approach," May-June 2003; and CPT David A. Meyer's "On a Wing and a Prayer," July-August 2003. Both explain, in some detail, the procedures they consider necessary in current doctrine for their part of an operational plan.

The U.S. Army Chief of Staff's goal is unfortunately not new; previous efforts have always fallen short. Probably the most recent, General Gordon Sullivan's drive during his tenure as Chief to make the Army a "learning organization," met with early enthusiasm, but he did not have time to change the Army's culture, and without a cultural change, progress was inevitably fleeting and superficial.

There is unquestionably a serious threat today to the toys and games of the traditional armor community. The threat, largely unspoken, is implicit in the drive to achieve lighter, smaller, more rapidly deployable units; in the nature of the illusive, irregular enemy; in the increased — and increasing — role of special forces; and in the absence of a near-term traditional conventional threat. How to respond? How to ensure continued relevance? First and foremost, is to accept that armor's future roles will be significantly different than they have been in the past. We should embrace this uncertainty, look outside our historic sandbox, and reject the tendency to preserve our organizations, doctrine, and processes as they exist and are planned today — despite recent tactical successes. Everything must be on the table. There are probably few lessons of value from Iraq.

Captain Chad Foster takes a good first step in his article, "Preparing for Iraq: A New Approach to Combined Arms Training," in the November-December 2003 issue of *ARMOR*, which suggests a different relationship may be necessary between the battalion and the company team as units of action.

The recent practices associated with our three training centers have hurt readiness and positive warrior values as much as they have helped: by requiring units to fill, train-up, and conduct detailed preparations to avoid failure; by providing standard tactical set pieces and excessive planning times for events; and by emphasizing process over product and the importance of rehearsals. If we intend to be an important part of the expeditionary forces of the future, shouldn't our basic training games be variations of the meeting engagement? It is time for our thinkers, our mavericks, to map out an innovative, questioning search for armor's future role — not in the nebulous 21st century, but in the joint expeditions tomorrow and the day after.

JOHN C. FAITH
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Salas a Little Too Far "Out of the Box"

Dear *ARMOR*,

I read Major Mark Salas' musings with great interest, especially his training center experience, in "Musings of an Armor Officer, January-February 2004, *ARMOR*. His experiences and fixes seem geared toward the National Training Center and the Combat Maneuver Training Center. He completely overlooks the Joint Readiness Training Center (JRTC) and its apparently unknown or forgotten benefits to heavy and light units. I will save the benefits of JRTC for a later article and will focus on the issues at hand.

I concur that training centers are an invaluable resource for deploying units but would submit that they are not as broken or out-of-touch as Salas portrays. First, the dismissal of the opposing force (OPFOR) and observer controllers (OCs) is a little too far "out-of-the-box" for me. These two components of the combat training center (CTC) system allow units to accomplish what they came to do in the first place, TRAIN!" Battalion commanders and command sergeants major, as well as company commanders and first sergeants, are absolutely capable of evaluating their soldiers. However, the OC brings experience from past units and rotations and an unbiased, doctrinally based observation to the training unit.

The second function of the OC allows the soldier in the position to read and study doctrine, begin graduate or undergraduate studies, and for a short amount of time, step out of the deploying units to a predictable and enjoyable assignment. The Army may be at a time where force structure is being questioned, but doing away with OPFOR units is a hasty fix that does not fully address the problem. Soldiers assigned to these units have the unenviable task of staying current on Army doctrine, as well as portraying the "enemy" to train our deployable units. I do not see this as a waste of training time and dollars if deploying soldiers benefit from this training, which I believe they do. Our National Guard units have enough on their plates with deployments and stateside responsibilities. I do not think that the OPFOR mission requirements can be trained and accomplished one weekend a month or during annual training.

I disagree that units depart CTCs "knowing how to take a beating." I keep in contact with soldiers who are training at the JRTC and have read personal accounts of experiences from soldiers in Iraq and Afghanistan, and not once have I heard a complaint that the rotation was too hard or the training was not applicable. On the contrary, the comments were geared around how the experience prepared the unit and the training was realistic. I see no value in sending a unit away after an easy scenario so that they "feel good" about their performance.

I, too, would like to see units show up better prepared for their rotations, but there are many good reasons why this does not happen. The last three rotations at JRTC have encompassed situational training exercise (STX) lane training beforehand. The STX lane training focused on cordon and search, combat patrols, fixed-site security, convoy operations, and medical platoon trauma. This training is focused at company and below levels and provides soldiers the opportunity to conduct these missions prior to rotation. A brigade or battalion at home station cannot match the amount of resources and time spent putting together training scenarios. This accomplishes the ramp-up course of action as the soldiers focus on tasks they will conduct during force on force, as well as when deployed. Feedback thus far has been positive.

The dismissal of precombat inspections, rehearsals, and after-action reviews is puzzling. Spending most, if not all, of your time in the turret, foxhole, or command post with a radio to your ear and missing the opportunity to review what happened and potential fixes, does not make sense. Most soldiers will agree that the training center experience does not allow for complex fixes during the rotation due to time constraints, but the unit leaves with a take-home packet, which they can open at home station and collectively decide what to implement.

I have observed that rehearsals rarely extend below company level and precombat inspections are nothing more than lip service. Therefore, home station training is not cutting it. Chapter 6, "Assessment," FM 7-0, *Training the Force*, stresses the importance of training assessment and after-action reviews as they apply to training. While maneuver time is precious during CTC rotations, the time spent preparing beforehand and reviewing afterward is just as important.

The fact is, routine business in the Army is changing and we must change the way we train to ensure our soldiers remain ready. Lessons learned from Iraq and Afghanistan will help us accomplish this and have already been integrated into our training methodology. CTCs and soldiers, civilians, and support personnel continue to ensure this happens.

"In no other profession are the penalties for employing untrained personnel so appalling or so irrevocable as in the military."

— General Douglas MacArthur, Annual Report of the Chief of Staff, Army 1933

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Dear *ARMOR*,

The purpose of this letter is to take exception to some of Major Mark Salas' recommendations in his article, "Musings of an Armor Officer," January-February 2004, *ARMOR*. While musing is a good thing, especially by officers young enough to make a difference in the future, extensive observation and 'thinking outside the box" is insufficient for taking action. Specifically, I would like to take exception to his recommendations to: do away with permanent opposing forces (OPFOR); gradually ramp-up the OPFOR; "we have made training too difficult;" and "instead of training, we are attempting to 'teach the test.'"

Do not do away with permanent opposing forces (OPFOR) if you value building skills and saving lives. In the 1990s, the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) did an extensive review of training trends, contributors to effective training, and the relationship of training to combat effectiveness. All of the combat training centers (CTC) reported that, in spite of the resounding victory during the Gulf War, they were seeing units arrive at the CTCs less prepared than before the war. The Army Research Institute for the Behavioral and Social Sciences (ARI) was then undertaking an extensive and meticulous review of data from the National Training Center (NTC), see Holz, Hiller, and McFann, *Determinants of Effective Unit Performance: Research on Measuring and Managing Unit Training Readiness*, U.S. Army Research for the Behavioral and Social Sciences, Alexandria, VA, 1994. Among other things, this effort was the impetus to the current battlefield operating systems (BOS) and found that the most critical components to home station training, the CTCs, and exercises were the presence of a realistic, demanding set of battle conditions; a skilled demanding OPFOR that would take advantage of weaknesses (the studies found that the more skilled the OPFOR units trained against in their pre-CTC trainups, the more successful they were against the CTC OPFOR); and skilled observers who could record events and replay them for participants for reflection and exploration. In spite of best efforts, commanders are part of the training audience and need feedback just like their subordinates. Those deeply engaged cannot recall events accurately.

Ramp-up occurs at home station under unit control; the CTC is meant to be the best surrogate of battle we can produce. There may be

Continued on Page 46

LETTERS from Page 4

some "ratcheting" or scaffolding that could enhance learning, but there is precious little time in the rotation do "gradual" anything. Potential solutions may be to lengthen CTC rotations, which increases costs and reduces the number of opportunities available to the total force, or proved mobile training teams for OPFOR to home station training events to increase the rigor of home station training. The CTCs fulfill the purpose for which they were designed — all services have seen a decrease in combat casualties after the implementation of world-class CTCs.

We have not made training too difficult. The first and most important stage of learning is learning what we do not know. War is difficult and unpredictable, so too should be training. Training research literature (much of it sponsored by the Army) is replete with evidence to support that training transfer is directly related to the faithfulness of the training environment to the employment environment. That does not mean that "bells and whistles" make good training. As Major Salas points out in his own anecdotes, "creative commanders can conduct enlightening training opportunities in pretty austere conditions, if they do not sacrifice performance standards in the process." There is nothing in Army training doctrine that prevents leaders from conducting crawl- and walk-level training events that are most beneficial to the skill levels of their units. However, learners should be challenged to the highest level they can be and still have the capability to absorb and practice new skills. To the extent that the three features identified by the ARI study are compromised, the overall transferability of the training event to the real world will be compromised. The best performers in every endeavor are those that are overtrained to the task to be performed.

Teaching the test can be excellent training, if you have a robust enough test. Teaching the test is superbly efficient if the test is sufficiently robust to represent the full set of demands that will be faced by the learner in application. Teaching the test becomes hazardous if the test is only a sample of behaviors needed in combat, or cannot replicate the full range of conditions that will be found in employment. If a sample test must be used, or the environment is not known well enough to faithfully reproduce it at the CTC, then units need to be provided multiple attempts with the conditions changed each time to capture as much of the environment as possible. Units will learn how to handle the ambiguity in specific environments and create solutions to cope, but mistakes made in training are a legitimate part of the learning process.

I encourage CTCs to remain the closest surrogate to the most demanding combat conditions we might face on contemporary battlefields. I think that the philosophy of the CTCs combined with mission rehearsal training has been validated over and over again. Our soldiers and units have taken on more complex and diverse missions than ever before in our history, and excelled. Admittedly, we always have more to learn, especially about how to make and keep the peace.

Of course CTCs need to be continually reviewed and updated to ensure that their version of war does represent the most challenging contemporary and emerging capabilities we might face. After repeated exposure to those standards, individuals and units will elevate their competency after each exposure, but they have to "know what they don't know" first, and that should be faced on friendly, if demanding, turf.

As Major Salas implies, "perhaps we need to focus more attention and effort on how to conduct quality home station training." This is not going to be achieved by more regulations and job performance aids, but by an in-depth look at how to train units as cohesive effects-producing entities, and backward building that into our unit training programs and training institutions. We have to stop disaggregating units into branches and MOS specialties, and look at how the pieces contribute or retard overall unit performance, and train units to compensate when broken or disabled.

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Kudos to Kojro

Dear *ARMOR*,

Kudos to Colonel Kojro's letter in the January-February issue of *ARMOR*, "Army Transformation Done Right." He is absolutely correct in his assertion that transformation is easily accomplished if we would just stop wasting time trying to reinvent the wheel. The armored cavalry regiment does indeed represent an almost perfect combined-arms organization and

should be the basis of our future mounted warfare doctrine and organization.

I would go further, however, and return the entire Army to the real regimental system we used before the Pentomic reorganization of the late 1950s.

Make the regiment an administrative and operational entity. Not only would this rid us of the confusing and all but meaningless regimental affiliations that currently exist within the Army, it would greatly facilitate cohesion among units within the regiments and encourage a far more profound sense of unit loyalty and pride in our soldiers. This last consideration has significant implications now that the Army envisions fewer changes of station for individual soldiers. Let's not be cynical. Unit pride does contribute to combat effectiveness and soldier retention.

Erwin Rommel correctly asserted that greater battlefield dispersion requires greater cohesion, not less. Yet, everything I see involving transformation seems to be leading us away from this fundamental truth, from potential "plug and play" tables of organization to the current infamous Army recruiting slogan, "An Army of One." I don't care what some civilian consulting firm says about attracting recruits. The Marine Corps has no problem filling its quotas, yet you don't see them resorting to Madison Avenue double-speak to attract enlistees.

So much of our success is based on mindset. That mindset must reflect an urgency and intensity that our soldiers will experience on the battlefield, not the "kinder, gentler" sensitivities we see increasingly undermining institutions and organizations in the civilian world. If we are really serious about Army transformation, removing the debilitating effects of cynicism and political correctness needs to be the first step.

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Pennsylvania Army National Guard

Tankers Deserve Better

Dear *ARMOR*,

I am a new member of the Armor Association and still consider myself a tanker. After reading the January-February issue of *ARMOR*, I was dumbfounded to learn that Armor units are dismounting their tankers and turning them into infantry and military police. Is there a shortage of military police and other personnel better suited to the mission in Iraq? Where were the tanks parked while crews dismounted and performed house-to-house searches? Did they send back the tanks early so they could perform as "dismounted combat tankers?" For armored crewmen, the tank is their strength, identity, and home. I don't know how this new generation of tankers feel, but if I was going to be dismounted and walk all over hell's creation, I would have joined the infantry.

During my service to my country in the Army, I performed some duties not usually associated with armor crewmen. Once while a driver in a tank company, my beloved tank was deadlined and stripped for parts. My crew and I were issued two HMMWVs and simulated Soviet antiarmor guns on trailers. This hurt deeply, but I performed my duties to the best of my abilities. Secondly, while serving in a tank company during Operation Desert Shield/Storm, my tank towed a disabled M88 back to the boneyard. The M88 broke down while towing damaged and disabled tanks. Now, that's something you don't see everyday.

I understand the Army is moving forward and maybe this is necessary due to personnel shortages, but it seems tankers deserve much better treatment. I also believe that tankers should be recognized for excellence. We have the Excellence in Armor program, but if a tank crew shoots a perfect score of 1,000 points, there is no badge (CIB) to show that excellence. Finally, I would like to give thanks and respect to the tankers, cavalry scouts, and M88 crews who serve their country proudly.

JOSE A. BARRIO
U.S. Army, Retired

Creating a Combat Action Badge Could Put an End to "Badge Wars"

Dear *ARMOR*,

I am a late arrival in the Combat Armor Badge discussion. I have silently watched the dialogue in *ARMOR* and other publications since the issue first surfaced. I feel that I must now throw my views on the Combat Armor Badge into the mix. Bottom line up front — we do not need a Combat Armor Badge. I know that cavalrymen and tankers the world over are now cursing my name! Not so fast brothers! Read on.

First, let me assure you that I fully recognize the disparity in recognition between an 11-series combat veteran and a 19-series veteran. I saw it firsthand after my return from Desert Storm. I have often asked the rhetorical question: What was the difference between an 11-series soldier filling an 88M slot in an infantry battalion support platoon and a 19-series soldier performing the same duties in an armor battalion during Desert Storm? Both performed the duties in combat conditions, yet the 11-series soldier received the Combat Infantryman's Badge (CIB) and the 19-series soldier received nothing.

What is the difference between the combat vehicle crew (commander, gunner, and driver) of an M2 Bradley Infantry Fighting Vehicle, an M3 Cavalry Fighting Vehicle, and an M1A1C Abrams main battle tank? The crewmembers of all three maneuvered their combat systems to a position of advantage and engaged the enemy with devastating results. The crews of all three combat vehicles endured similar hardships and faced comparable dangers. The only difference that I can ascertain is that the M2 crew received recognition for their contributions to the direct firefight in the form of the CIB. I don't want to beat a dead horse here, but I can think of no better illustration of this disparity than that of Specialist (SPC) Vineyard.

Long story short, SPC Vineyard is a cavalry scout assigned to E Troop, 238th Cavalry, 76th eSB, Indiana Army National Guard. Shortly after he and his unit returned from a 6-month stabilization forces (SFOR) rotation in Bosnia, SPC Vineyard volunteered to join a sister unit in the 76th eSB that was mobilizing, but not at full strength. SPC Vineyard was assigned to D Company, 1st Battalion, 293d Infantry, as a driver in a tube-launched, optically tracked, wire-guided (TOW) missile platoon.

While I do not know the particulars of D Company's exploits during Operation Iraqi Freedom, I do know that the company's soldiers, to include the soldiers on SPC Vineyard's truck, were awarded the CIB. Despite the fact that SPC Vineyard shared the same hardships and danger of his fellow soldiers, he did not receive the CIB because of his military occupational series (MOS).

There is one point that I do not believe has surfaced. The 3d Infantry Division is in the process of transformation. Soon, all of their maneuver battalions will be combined arms battalions with a mix of either two armor companies and one infantry company or two infantry companies and one armor company. A similar combined arms battalion is the centerpiece of the future unit of action. It is time for a change in the way that we do business. Will future CIB award ceremonies in the 3d Infantry Division involve two-thirds of the unit being awarded the CIB, while the other one-third stand in formation and observe?

I agree with those who have written that soldiers in direct-fire contact with an enemy, deserve recognition beyond wearing a combat patch on their right shoulder. However, I do not believe that for our 19-series soldiers it should come in the form of a Combat Armor Badge. Don't get me wrong, I think the designs are great and I am sure that they would be a mark of pride and distinction for our soldiers. In fact, after looking at the designs, particularly the 1986 design, I almost did not write this letter in the hopes that the badge would get approved. But, I believe that it is not in the best interest of our Army to have such a badge.

Fellow troopers, I submit to you that our Army would be better served by recognizing our soldiers who have faced an enemy in direct-fire combat with a Combat Action Badge. We are an Army in transformation. A few years ago, we donned the black beret as a symbol of that transformation. It is time for the disparity of the Combat Infantry Badge to end. It is time for the perceived badge wars to end. It is now time to take our transformation one step further. It is time for the Combat Action Badge.

What is the Combat Action Badge? Simply put, it is a badge of distinction that recognizes hardships endured by and dangers faced by soldiers who have encountered an enemy in a direct-fire battle. I don't know the criteria for the Combat Action Badge — there are plenty of smart people who can figure out the particulars. As I envision the criteria, the badge should be awarded to any soldier, regardless of MOS, who has maneuvered in a direct firefight against an armed enemy. How will this new symbol of excellence look? Again, I am not sure. But I ask you, what better existing symbol is there than the present Combat Infantry Badge that could be adopted as the new Combat Action Badge?

Your thoughts?

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